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ABSTRACT

Each year one week is designated by the Governor of New York as Adult Learning Week because of the growing importance of adult education to society and the economy of New York State. The major purpose of Adult Learning Week is to promote greater public awareness of the availability and variety of learning opportunities for adults. In practical terms, Adult Learning Week provides an opportunity for the many providers of adult education to draw attention to the importance of adult learning and to plan activities that reach and involve the adult segment of the population. This packet contains ideas for planning activities to celebrate Adult Learning Week. It describes actual events that have been sponsored successfully by schools, colleges, universities, private schools, libraries, museums, employers, unions, and many others. Also included in this packet are two planning guides. One guide is intended to help planners decide whom they want to reach and what message they want to deliver during Adult Learning Week. A second guide is intended to help planners select the best events to plan during the week. (KC)

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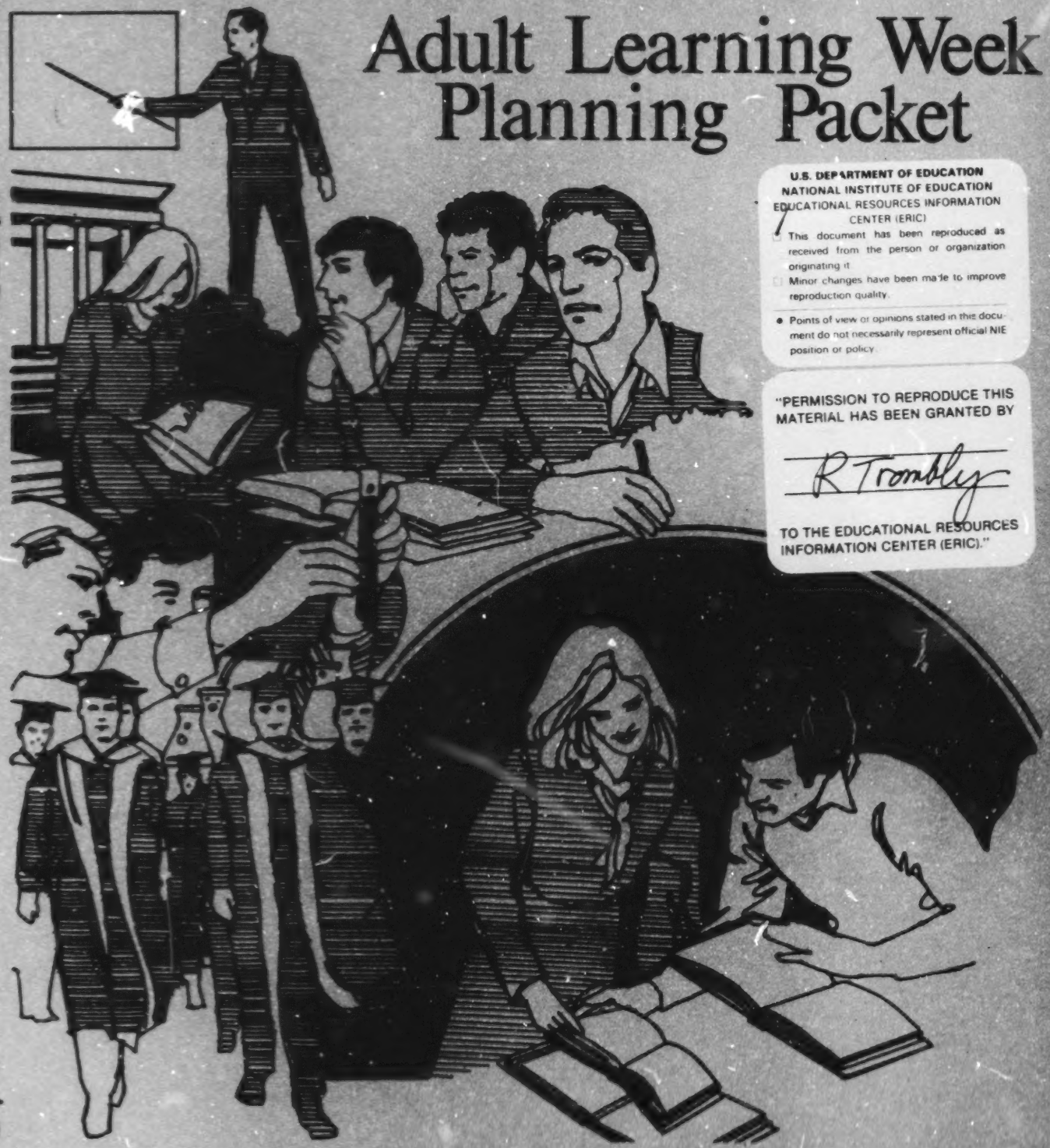
Adult Learning Week Planning Packet



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ADULT LEARNING WEEK
PLANNING PACKET

MAY, 1984

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The University of the State of New York
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ADULT LEARNING WEEK

Each year one week is designated by the Governor as Adult Learning Week because of the growing importance of adult education to society and the economy of New York State. The major purpose of Adult Learning Week is to promote greater public awareness of the availability and variety of learning opportunities for adults. This Week is part of the State Education Department's effort to implement the Goals for Adult Learning Services, adopted by the Board of Regents in December, 1981.

In the information age, the ability to acquire new knowledge and skills is critically important. The numbers of adults participating in learning activities of all kinds are growing, but the full benefits to individuals and society are a long way from being realized. There are still large numbers of adults who do not participate or whose participation could be increased. Among the reasons given for lower levels of participation are:

- Lack of awareness of the reasons why adult learning is important and beneficial.
- Lack of information about availability of learning opportunities.
- Lack of confidence and feelings of personal inadequacy.
- Lack of sufficient commitment of public funds to provide adequate opportunities, particularly for those with least education and personal resources.

In practical terms, Adult Learning Week provides an opportunity for the many providers of adult education to draw attention to the importance of adult learning and to plan activities that reach and involve the adult segment of the population.

Messages to be communicated during the Week and throughout the year might include:

- The importance of adult learning to individuals and society.
- The variety, quality, quantity and accessibility of learning opportunities and the resources available to help.
- The extent of present participation with indications of underserved populations and unmet social needs.
- Learning is a legitimate adult activity.

-- Everyone can learn -- age, previous education, geography, handicaps and finances are not barriers.
-- Learning never ends.

ABOUT THIS PACKET

This packet contains more than just ideas for planning activities to celebrate Adult Learning Week. It describes actual events that have been successfully sponsored by schools, BOCES, colleges and universities, private schools, libraries, museums, employers, unions and many others.

Also included in this packet are two planning guides. One guide helps planners decide whom they want to reach and what message they want to deliver during Adult Learning Week. A second guide helps select the best event(s) to plan during the Week.

WHAT TO DO?

When planning for Adult Learning Week, first think of your audience (or public). Who is it that you are trying to reach -- policymakers, adults without a high school diploma and/or college degree, community agencies, business, local government, selected community groups, the general public? Next ask yourself what message you would like to convey - a success, an issue, a need? Finally, ask yourself what would be the best way to deliver your message to your targeted audience? The two planning guides in this packet are designed to help answer these questions.

As the planning process begins, there are two important things to keep in mind:

-- Allow as much lead time as possible for planning your event.
-- The more groups you include in the planning process, the more participation you will gain.

IDEAS, IDEAS, IDEAS

When planning your promotion and publicity, try to think of ideas that will have a lasting effect beyond Adult Learning Week. Also try to plan something special for different segments of the adult population.

The best way to attract publicity is to create a media event. If you plan properly, you can attract both the written and broadcast media. Unique ideas are best, and large gatherings are most likely to attract the press.

To publicize your special event, consider these ideas:

-- Posters, flyers, notices, signs.
-- News releases, public service announcements, calendars of events, free classified ads.
-- Invitations, coupons, radio show premiums, ("The ninth caller will receive...")
-- Organizational newsletters, including your own.

***Distribute Promotional Materials**

Promotional materials carrying the theme, "Learning Never Ends" or "Plan to Learn" can be distributed through sales, give-aways or contests. Items such as bumper stickers, T-shirts and caps are available for purchase at bulk rates. These items will promote lifelong learning every time they are seen throughout the year.

***Political Debate**

Work with local educational, business or labor groups to sponsor a political debate on "What kinds of learning are essential to economic development in New York State" or another appropriate topic. Invite local, county and state legislators to debate. Televise the debate through the local cable channel and arrange for press coverage. Use the opportunity to highlight activities, programs and services for adults in your community.

***Feature Articles**

Send local newspapers press releases about your special activities and programs for adults. Send several releases over the two-week span leading up to Adult Learning Week. You may also want to contact the features editor of the local paper and ask if he or she will publish a feature article on adult learning. Be sure to highlight how your program is addressing a specific and current need in the community.

***Certificates and Awards**

Present an award or certificate to outstanding community leaders who have been supportive during the past year, or people you feel still need convincing. These could include the mayor or a city councilman, a local businessman or local legislator. Present the award at a special event -- the opening of a senior citizen or parent education center in the school, an adult education graduation ceremony, an adult learning fair in a shopping mall, a cultural or recreational event, etc. Arrange for an article and a picture in the newspaper.

***Local Proclamation**

Arrange for the local Board of Education, the mayor, superintendent, county supervisor, college or university president to issue a public proclamation for Adult Learning Week. A copy of the Governor's proclamation can be used as the basis for a local proclamation. Work with local officials and the press to arrange publicity. Arrange a special ceremony for the announcement.

***Informative Breakfast or Dinner**

Mail embossed RSVP invitations to local dignitaries inviting them to a special breakfast or dinner. Arrange a tour of your programs and services and arrange special activites.

***Talk Shows**

Schedule appearances on local radio or television talk shows to discuss the importance of adult learning in the information age. Include representatives from business, local government, cultural organizations, labor or community organizations that sponsor programs and activities for adults in your community.

***Open House**

Sponsor an Open House Reception for the community. Set up display tables and arrange special activities. Use the reception to distribute information about your programs and services, to announce new programs or activities, to register attendees for classes which may be forming or to survey community members about what services they would like you to provide.

***Guest Passes**

Place an ad in the newspaper that gives a guest pass to visit programs and classes during Adult Learning Week. Invite continuing education students' families and friends to learn more about credit and non-credit learning opportunities.

***Coupon Discounts**

Place an ad in local newspapers and community newsletters. Include a course discount coupon for adults to use in the continuing education program. Invite people from the community to sit in on adult education classes during the Week.

***Shopping Mall**

Hold a "mini-fair" at the local shopping malls. Invite local schools, BOCES, colleges and universities, cultural organizations, unions and others to set up display tables.

***Workshops/Seminars**

Prior to Adult Learning Week, conduct a survey of community information needs. Develop and distribute a questionnaire asking community members to identify issues and topics about which they would like more information. Work with local educational, business and labor groups to arrange workshops and seminars during the Week.

***Presentation at Local Chamber of Commerce**

Make a special presentation at your local chamber of commerce meeting to highlight successful adult education programs and to explore new opportunities for cooperation.

***Business Forum**

Host a business forum at your institution. Invite representatives from business and industry and unions, community leaders and representatives of local government to discuss ideas for strengthening education through partnerships.

***Meet With Local Businesses**

Survey staff to identify program needs that might be met by local businesses and unions. Also identify potential services that your institution could offer in return (e.g., use of facilities, computer training, adult education programs). Make appointments to meet with representatives from local businesses and unions to discuss cooperative arrangements.

ADULT LEARNING WEEK EVENT ORGANIZER

Step 1: Establish a Representative Planning Group

Whether the potential event is large or small, it is suggested that the composition of the planning group include representation from both your institution and the community. In many cases, this may involve early discussions with

community groups and organizations who may wish to co-sponsor the event. Potential backers such as local employers, unions and regional professional associations may be approached to join in the initial planning. You may also wish to host a special meeting of potential supporters and co-sponsors to establish an initial planning group. Involving key decision-makers early in the planning stages is the key to a successful event.

Step 2: Explore the Possibilities

Successful events are tailored to the specific needs, resources and interests of the community. An open house will work in one community; a job fair will work in another. One approach to the initial planning is to talk to groups that have sponsored successful events in the past or may have special expertise in planning such activities. Local schools, church and civic groups, the chamber of commerce, parent groups, community agency representatives, local directors of continuing and community education in nearby schools or postsecondary institutions, the local library or museum, banks, the mayor's office and other representatives of local government are just a few of the resources which can be tapped for ideas and help in planning activities.

Another way to approach the initial planning is to assess the various kinds of adult learning programs that are already in place in the community. Parent education activities, adult education programs and partnerships with business and industry are good examples of activities that might be showcased during Adult Learning Week.

A third approach is to identify opportunities for creating new partnerships with business and industry and collaborative relationships with other adult education providers. Identify goals for developing and expanding these relationships within the next year, and plan activities for Adult Learning Week as initial steps toward those goals.

Finally, begin to think of activities that will reach and involve your targeted audience. Once they are identified, the planning group may wish informally or formally to survey them through door-to-door interviews, mailed questionnaires or special meetings to get their ideas for activities that could meet their needs and

interests. At the same time, these activities will build their interest and involvement.

Step 3: Select the Event

The group's governing body -- Board of Education, Board of Directors or equivalent, should make the final decision committing the group to an event. It may have several interrelated reasons for sponsoring an event: to increase public awareness, to raise money, to generate community support for your programs, to initiate new activities, to highlight existing programs and services, or to explore the possibility of new partnerships.

Once the event is selected, the planning group should establish procedures for how the event will be organized. For small groups organizing small events, the initial planning group itself may wish to take on the various tasks and duties themselves. (Go to Step 7) For larger events, Steps 4-6 offer additional suggestions.

Step 4: Appoint an Events Chairperson

The sponsoring organization(s) should select an events chairperson. Along with the steering committee (see Step 6), the events chairperson will plan the event, prepare a budget, set a timetable and recruit committee heads. The events chairperson should also coordinate the event, making sure that all committees understand their duties, preventing duplication of effort or omissions among committees, monitoring committee progress to insure that work is done on time, and handling the inevitable crises.

Step 5: Establish a Committee System

Initially, the organizers of a community event may feel overwhelmed by innumerable tasks and details. The purpose of the committee system is to divide the workload of an event into manageable arenas. Once these arenas are defined, it becomes much easier for the events chairperson or committee head to identify what must be done and how this can be accomplished.

A committee system will vary in size. A small event may require only a few committees. each containing only one or two persons. Large events may require numerous committees with many members who are further divided into subcommittees. Exactly how an event is divided depends on the nature of the event and upon the skills and interests of available volunteers and committee heads.

Step 6: Form a Steering Committee

As an event is being organized, an event steering committee should be formed to plan and coordinate the event. Initially, the committee would consist of the events c airperson and the original committee heads. Newly appointed committee heads would automatically become members of the steering committee.

For an organization sponsoring a new event, a steering committee can meet regularly (weekly) to plan the event and discuss innumerable details and ideas (What is the best date? What hours? Should we have posters or flyers? What about games for children?) Steering committee meetings also enable committee heads to get to know each other and coordinate their activities, and enable everyone to reassure each other that everything is being done.

Prepare a list of every member of the steering committee, their committee assignment and their home/work phone numbers. Distribute copies to every member of the committee.

Step 7: Define Committee Tasks

Committee heads and other committee members, following guidance provided by the events chairperson, should list in very specific detail what their committee must do to fulfill its responsibilities.

Have each committee develop a list of the different tasks it must undertake. The events chairperson should collect and coordinate these lists.

Publicity

Inform and remind the target audience by using a publicity campaign tailored to your event and community. Check the type of publicity you will need and assign the tasks as needed to achieve it.

Arragements/Permits

Establish an arrangement committee to fill out any necessary forms, make reservations and get permits, or assign these tasks to other committees.

Step 8: Itemize a Budget

Prepare a budget. List expenses. List advance revenue, including possible donations and advance ticket sales. (Be liberal with expense estimates, conservative with revenue.) Estimate what it will cost to produce the event. It is more difficult to estimate the total revenue/expenses of an event, as turnout (and weather) is difficult to predict. Estimate gross revenue/expenses for different circumstances: good weather/large turnout; poor weather/low turnout; rain-out/cost to reschedule.

Itemize all expenses; printing costs, hall rental, supplies, food, insurance, permit fees, acoustical equipment and others. Using these estimates, the chairperson can confirm that the initial budget was accurate, that the organization does have the financial means for producing the event and that any "start-up" funds appropriated by contributors are sufficient. Based on these figures, the events chairperson can also apportion the available funds among the different committees.

This budget should also be used to identify equipment or services that might be donated, as a community event provides an excellent opportunity to call upon merchants and businesses to ask for support.

Step 9: Develop a Timetable

The next important task is to establish a timetable for an event. Many deadlines must be met. There are always tasks which must be done immediately if an event is to be undertaken at all. Also, one committee may not be able to do its job until another has done its job.

Jointly, the events chairperson and the committee heads should establish due dates for each committee task.

The timetable might be a graph or a log of what must be accomplished each week (or month) before the event.

Step 10: Recruit Volunteers

After identifying specific tasks, the group should reach out to involve community members and recruit volunteers. There is usually something for everyone to do -- including elderly people and children. Volunteers can help reduce the workload of an event so that people do not feel overburdened. In addition, when volunteers work on an event, their commitment to that event (and the organization) increases. It is likely they will attend and will bring their friends and families.

Identify tasks which volunteers can accomplish and describe how you will contact/organize these volunteers.

When recruiting volunteers, it is helpful to be specific and personal. Volunteers often will not arrive solely on the basis of a printed announcement or public appeal. Call or visit the members or residents to explain why they are needed, ask them to do a very specific, manageable task and get a yes or no answer to this request for help. Assuming the organization has a good reputation and the event is worthwhile, there should be many positive responses. Keep committees open for new members, but do not demand that all volunteers come to committee meetings or accept open-ended assignments.

Step 11: Do It!

Having completed Steps 1 through 10, the group should be organized to produce the event. This preparation will make it easier but not easy. To be successful, many people will have to work cooperatively together, learn new skills, shoulder responsibilities and be prepared to handle the unexpected.

To coordinate all the activities on the day of the event, it is useful to prepare a factsheet for committee/volunteer use, describing each major activity, its

location, time and the name of the person in charge. Detail standard procedures, such as how money will be collected, provide answers to likely questions ("Where is the rest room?"), and emergency phone numbers.

Step 12: Clean Up and Give Thanks

An event is not finished when the public goes home. It is always good to plan in advance, to have volunteers assigned to take down decorations, remove signs and posters, and clean up.

"Thank you's" are essential. All organizers of an event should personally thank those who helped them. Volunteers and donors should also be thanked at meetings and/or named and thanked in a newsletter or an event program. Thank you letters are always appropriate.

Step 13: Conduct an Evaluation

The experience gained by a group in conducting a special event is an invaluable asset that can make it easier to sponsor the same or similar event or a more ambitious event in the future.

Soon after an event, the steering committee plus at least some representatives from the group's governing body should meet to discuss what worked well, what could have been done better and how the event could be improved and/or expanded.

All documents, including worksheets, budgets, receipts, records of donations, lists of volunteers, guest registers and copies of printed materials should be assembled and stored for future reference.

Review Steps 1 through 12 to determine how the event could have been better planned and organized.

PLANNING GUIDE 1: WHOM DO YOU WANT TO REACH?

	1 How are they currently involved in adult learning?	2 How could they become more involved/ supportive?	3 What information/ messages will affect the involvement/ support?	4 What is the best way to get this information to your target audience?
School Board Members/Trustees				
School Administrators/ Presidents				
Teachers				
Support Staff				
Other Staff				
Parents				
Community Leaders				
Business, Foundation, and Union Leaders				
Program Participants				
Program Aides/ Volunteers				
Community Agencies				
Special Groups in the Community				
General Public				

See "HOW CAN YOU REACH YOUR AUDIENCE?"

PLANNING GUIDE 2: HOW CAN YOU REACH YOUR AUDIENCE?

	Personal contact: letters/ notes	Door-to-door distribution of information	Direct mailing	Special publications Flyers/ Newsletters	Print Media: Feature News Stories	Radio or TV Media: Talk Shows or PSAs*	Special Publicity Event	Meeting or Workshop	Cooperative Work Project
School Board Members/Trustees									
School Administrators/ Presidents									
Teachers									
Support Staff									
Other Staff									
Parents									
Community Leaders									
Business, Foundation, and Union Leaders									
Program Participants									
Program Aides/ Volunteers									
Community Agencies									
Special Groups in the Community									
General Public									

(Insert the messages from #3 "Whom Do You Want to Reach?" in the appropriate blank spaces)

* Public Service Announcements

RESOURCES

More Information

The State Education Department's Office of Adult Learning Services will be able to provide information about what Adult Learning Week activities are planned in your area. For more information contact the ALS office, Room 5A47 Cultural Education Center, Albany, New York 12230 or call (518) 474-5972.

Pamphlets

Two excellent pamphlets are available at low cost through the League of Women Voters.

Getting Into Print is a four-page pamphlet filled with tips and examples of how to work with the print media. It explains how to research, gives tips on timing, provides guidance on the wire services, and offers hints on other ways to get into print beyond the traditional methods. It also provides examples of news releases. (40¢).

Breaking Into Broadcasting is a six-page pamphlet containing guidelines for approaching the media and developing radio and TV spots. It tells you where to start and what to do. Sample spot announcements are included along with a resource listing of low-cost publications. A listing of national organizations dealing with broadcasting is also included. (60¢).

For the above publications contact: League of Women Voters of the United States, 1730 M Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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RESOURCE SUPPLEMENT: BASIC GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH THE MEDIA

MEDIA CONTACT

1. Develop and distribute a news release on your events or programs. Be sure to include the name and phone number of the person who can provide additional information.

2. Call editors and news directors who might assign feature stories about adult learning or on-site coverage of a special event. Discuss what you are doing or planning and invite their coverage.

3. If you have requested on-site coverage of a special event, call the assignment desk the day before as reminder.

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT (PSA's) FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION

1. Contact the community affairs director of at least one radio and one TV station before submitting PSA's. Tell them what you want to communicate and ask their advice on the best presentation format.

2. Radio scripts to be read on air may vary in length between 10 and 60 seconds. For best results, provide several scripts written for different time frames.

3. TV PSA's must be visual. One or two good-quality color slides, accompanied by a script, are often acceptable by stations.

TALK SHOWS

1. Call or write to the producer well in advance; up to six weeks for television shows; at least several weeks for radio shows.

2. Describe briefly the people you are proposing for interviews, what they will talk about, and why this subject is of interest to the talk show audience.

3. If interviews are scheduled, rehearse beforehand. Prepare a list of questions and have interviewees answer them aloud before a small group. Critique the responses.

ON-SITE COVERAGE

1. Assign someone to work with the media at the event. Provide background information, introduce the media to designated spokespersons, and help arrange photographs and interviews.

2. Introduce the media to community representatives who can comment on the importance and benefits of adult learning.